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Our Pulpit.

"THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED."

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, BY CHARLES H. O'NEAL, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

The disciple whom Jesus loved; who also leaned on his breast at supper.—John 13:23.

To be loved as John was, with a special love, is an inmost desire of every true Christian. You must not imagine when I try to exhibit some of the lovable traits of John's character, that I would have you infer that the love of Christ went forth towards John in any other way than according to the law of grace, for whatever there was that was lovable in John, it was wrought in him by the grace of God. Our Lord exercised a sovereignty of love, and chose John for his own sake; and yet at the same time there was created in John much that was a fit object for the love of Christ.

1. LET US CONSIDER THE NAME ITSELF.—"The disciple whom Jesus loved."

Our first observation is—it is a name which John gives to himself. I think he repeats it five times. No other writer calls John "the disciple whom Jesus loved." John has this name to himself, and all the early writers recognize him under that title. Do not suspect him, however, of egotism. It is one of the instances in which egotism is quite out of the question. Naturally, you and I would be rather slow to take such a title, even if it belonged to us, because we should be jealous for our name, and afraid of being thought presumptuous; but with a sweet modesty which makes him quite forget himself, John took the name which he knew most accurately described him, whether others called him so or no. So far from there being any pride in it, it just shows the simplicity of his spirit, the openness, the transparency of his character, and his complete self-forgetfulness. Knowing it to be the truth, he does not hesitate to say it; he was sure that Jesus loved him better than others, and though he wondered at it more than any one else did, yet he could not help publishing it, whatever the consequences to himself might be. Often there is a deal more pride in not wishing to be mentioned than in wishing to be mentioned.

What has John done for us, then in speaking of it? Everything depends upon the spirit which moves us. I have heard of a man, with the deepest humility speak, with full assurance, of the divine love, and while some have thought that he was presumptuous, I have felt within myself that his positive testimony was perfectly consistent with the deepest humility, and that it was his simple modesty which made the man so utterly forget himself as to run the risk of being thought forward and egotistical. He was thinking of how he should glorify God, and the appearance of glorifying himself did not alarm him, for he had forgotten himself in his Master. I wish we could bear to be laughed at as proud for our Lord's sake. We shall never have John's name, John, if we dare wear it without a blush.

It was a name which was never disputed. You do not find any one complaining of John for thus describing himself. General consent awarded him the title. His brethren did quarrel with him a little, when his fond mother, Salome, wanted thrones for her two sons on the right and the left hand of the Messiah, but the love of Jesus to John never caused any ill-will amongst the brethren, nor did John take any undue advantage of it. I believe that the apostles tacitly acknowledged that their Lord was perfectly right in his choice. There was something about John which made his brethren love him, and therefore they did not marvel that their Lord should make him his most intimate friend. The truly loved one of God, generally receives the love of his brethren, ay, and even the love of the ungodly after a sort; for when a man's ways please the Lord, he makes them his enemies to be at peace with him. While David walked with God all Israel loved him, even Saul was forced to cry, "Thou art more righteous than I." John was so loving that he gained love everywhere. We may well be eager after this choice blessing, since it alone of all known treasures excites no envy among the brethren, but the rather makes all the godly rejoice. Inasmuch as saints wish to be greatly loved themselves, they are glad when they meet with those who have obtained that blessing. If we would ourselves smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia, we are glad to meet with those whose garments are already fragrant. You never find John lecturing his brethren, or acting as a lord over God's heritage, but in all gentleness and lowliness he justified the affection which our Lord manifested toward him.

II. Thus much, then, with regard to the name. Secondly, let us look at the character which lay below it. I can only give a miniature of John; it is quite impossible in the few moments of a sermon to draw a full-length portrait, and, indeed, I am not artist enough to accomplish it if I should attempt the task. In the character of John, we see much that is admirable.

First, let us look at his personality as an individual. His was a

large and warm heart. Perhaps his main force lies in the intensity of his nature. He is not vehement, but deep and strong. Whatever he did, he did right heartily. He was simple-minded, a man in whom there was no guile; there was no division in his nature; he was one and indivisible in that he felt or did. He did not entertain questions, he was not captious, he was not apt to spy out faults in others, and as to difficulties, mental or otherwise, he seems to have been happily without them. Having possessed and come to a conclusion, his whole nature moved in solid phalanx with forceful march; whichever way he went he went altogether, and right resolutely. Some men go two ways, or they tack about, or they go towards their object in an indirect manner; but John steered straight forward, with the stars blazing and the sun at his back, and he was one whole soul engaged in his Lord's cause, for he was a deep thinker, a silent student, and then a forceful actor. He was not impetuous with the haste of Peter, yet he was determined and thorough-going, and all on fire with zeal.

Let us now view him in his relation to his Lord. The name he takes to himself is "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Jesus loved him as a disciple. What sort of disciples do masters love? You that have ever been teachers of youth know that, if teachers, had to select before others, if we teach, we love teachable people: such as John. He was a man quick to learn, he was not like Thomas, slow, argumentative, cautious; but, having once assured himself that he had a true teacher, he gave himself right up to him, and was willing to receive what he had to reveal.

One great trait in John's character, as a disciple, was his intense love for his teacher; he not only received the truth, but he received the Master himself. I take it that the leaning of a man's faults often betrays his heart more than his virtues. It may seem a strange observation to make, but it is true. A true heart may well be seen in its weakness as in its excellence. What was the weak point about John, as some would say? On one occasion, he was intolerant. Certain persons were casting out devils, and he forbade them because they followed not the disciples. Now, that intolerance, mistaken as it was, grew out of love to his Lord; he was afraid that these interlopers might set up as rivals to his Lord, and he wanted them to come under the rule of his beloved Jesus. At another time, the Pharisees would not receive him, and he asked his Master that he might call down fire from Heaven on them. One does not commend him, but still it was love to Jesus which made him indignant at their ungenerous conduct to their best friend. He felt so indignant that men should not entertain the Savior who had come into the world to bless them, that he would even call fire from Heaven, and he showed his burning love for Jesus. Even when his mother asked that he and the brother might sit upon thrones at the right hand and the left hand of Christ, it was a deep and thoughtful faith in Jesus which suggested it. His idea of honor and glory was bound up with Jesus. If he gives way to ambition, it is an ambition to reign with the despised Galilean. He does not want a throne, unless it be at his Lord's side. Moreover, what faith there is in that request! I am not going to justify it, but I am going to say something to moderate your condemnation. Our Lord was going to Jerusalem to be spat upon, and to be put to death, and yet John so thoroughly threw himself into his Lord's hands, that he would have shared in the same fate as his great Master, assured that it must end in his enthronement. He is content, he says, to be baptized with his baptism, and to drink of his cup; he only asks to share with Jesus in all things. As a good writer says, it reminds one of the courage of the Roman who, when Rome was in the hands of the enemy, purchased a house within the walls: John heroically asks for a throne at the side of one who was about to die on the cross, for he feels sure that he will triumph. When the cause and kingdom of Christ seemed ready to expire, yet so whole-hearted was John in his faith in God and his love to his beloved Lord, that his highest ambition was still to be with Jesus, and take shares with him in all that he would do and be. So, you see, all through he loved his Lord with all his heart, and therefore Jesus Christ loved him; or let me turn it the other way—the Lord loved John, and therefore he loved the Lord Jesus. It is his own explanation of it: "We love him because he first loved us."

Of all the disciples, John was most Christlike. Like will to like. Jesus liked John for what he saw of himself in him, created by his grace. Thus I think you will see that, without supposing John to have possessed any merit, there were points in his personal character, in his character as a disciple, and in his character as an educated, spiritual man, which justified our Savior in making him the object of his most intimate affection.

Very briefly, in the third place, let us review the life which grew out of this extraordinary love of Christ.

What was the life of John? First, it was a life of intimate communion. John was wherever Christ

was. Other disciples are put away, but Peter, James and John, are present. When all the disciples sit at the table, even Peter is not nearest to the Lord Jesus, but John leans his head upon his bosom. Their intercourse was very near and dear. Jesus and John were David and Jonathan over again. If you are a man greatly beloved, you will live in Jesus, your fellowship will be with him from day to day.

Hence his life was one of special usefulness. He was entrusted with choice commissions involving high honor. The Lord gave him to do a work of the most tender and delicate kind, which I am afraid he could not commit to some of us. As the Redeemer hung on the tree dying, he saw him stand in the throng, and he did not commit him to Peter, but to John. Peter would have been glad to do the work, but he was not sure, and so would Thomas, and so would James; but the Lord said to John, "Behold thy mother," and to his mother, "Woman, behold thy son." And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home. So modest, so retiring, I was going to say so gentlemanly, was John, that he was the man to take charge of a broken-hearted mother. Said I wrong that he was a true gentleman? Divide the word, and surely he was the gentlest of men. John has a delicate air and considerate manner, conducive to the care of an honored woman. Peter is good, but he is rough; Thomas is stiff, but cold; John is tender and sympathetic. When you love Jesus much, he will trust his mother to you; I mean his church and the poorest people in it, such as widows and orphans, and poor ministers. He will trust them to you, because he loves you much. He will not put everybody into that office. Some of his people are very hard and stern of heart, fitted to be tax-collectors rather than distributors of alms. They would make capital officers of an army, but not nurses in a hospital. If you love Jesus much, you shall have many delicate offices to perform, which shall be to you proofs of your Lord's trust in you, and renewed tokens of his love.

John's life was, moreover, one of extraordinary heavenliness. They call him John the Divine, and he was. His eagle wings bore him aloft into the heavenly places, and there he beheld the glory of the Lord. Whether in Jerusalem or in Antioch, in Ephesus or in Patmos, his conversation was in Heaven. The Lord's Day found him in the Spirit, waiting for him that cometh with clouds, so waiting that he who is the Alpha and Omega hastened to reveal himself to him. It was the love of his Lord which had thus prepared him for visions of the glory. Had not that love so enkindled his own love as to hold him faithfully at the cross all through the agony, he might never have been able to gaze upon the throne. He had lovingly followed him who had been pointed out to him as the "Lamb of God," and therefore he was made meet to see him as the Lamb in the midst of the throne, adorned of angels and redeemed saints, whose harps and voices are engrossed with his praise. O that we, too, could be freed from the grossness of earth, and borne aloft into the purer atmosphere of spiritual and heavenly things.

IV. We close by saying, very briefly, let us learn lessons for ourselves from that disciple whom Jesus loved. May the Holy Spirit speak them to our inmost hearts.

First, I speak to those of you are still young. If you wish to be "the disciple whom Jesus loved," begin soon. I suppose that John was between twenty and twenty-five when he was converted; at any rate, he was a young man. All the representations of him which have been handed down to us, though I attach no great value to them, yet unite in the fact of his youth. Youthful piety has the most profitable opportunity of becoming eminent piety. If you begin soon to walk with Christ, you will improve your pace, and when you will grow up in the faith, you will be a Christian in the last few years of his life, with scarcely a degree of lack of time, and from the hampering influence of old habits; but you who begin soon are planted in good soil, with a sunny aspect, and should come to maturity. Soldiers who enlist early under the banner of our David have hope of becoming veterans and attaining to the first three.

Next, if we would be like John in being loved by Christ, let us give our heart's best thoughts to spiritual things. Brethren and sisters, do not stop in the outward ordinance, but plunge into the inner meaning. Recollect that the letter killeth; it is the spirit that giveth life. The Lord Jesus Christ takes no delight in those who are fond of broad phylacteries, and multiplied sacraments, and holy observances. The Father seeks those who worship him who worship him in spirit and in truth. Be spiritual, and you are among

those who are likely to be man greatly beloved. If you want to be the man that Jesus loves, cultivate strong affection and let your nature be tender and kind. The man who is habitually cross, and frequently angry, cannot walk with God. A man of a quick, hot temper, who never tries to check it, of a man in whom there is a malicious remembrance of injuries, like a smoldering ember, the embers, cannot be the companion and friend of Jesus, whose spirit is of an opposite character. A pitiful, passionate, unselfish, generous heart is that which our Lord approves. Forgive your fellow as you never had anything to forgive.

When brethren injure you, hope that they know you in mistake, and that they will be glad to set you right. Do not treat your wrongdoers as you would treat your enemies. Be willing to lay down, not only your comfort, but even your life for the brethren. Live in the joy of others, even as saints do in Heaven. Love others so as to forget your own sorrows. So shall you become a man greatly beloved. Last of all, may the Spirit of God help you to rise to heavenliness. Do not be miserable money-grubbers, or sordid earth-worms; do not be pleasure hunters and novelty seekers, do not set your affection upon these children's toys, which will be so soon broken up. Have no more children, but men of God. Oh, to find your joy in Christ, your wealth in Christ, your honor in Christ, your everything in Christ—this is peace. To be in the world but not to be of it; to linger here as if you were an angel sent from Heaven to dwell for a while among the sons of men, to tell them of Heaven, and point them the way—this is to abide in Christ's love. To always be ready to fly to stand on tip toe, waiting for the heavenly call, to expect to hear the trumpet ring out its clarion note, the trumpet of the coming of your Lord—this is to have fellowship with Christ. Set loose, I pray you, by this world; get a tighter grip of the world to come—so shall Jesus' love be shed abroad within you. Throw your anchor upward, into the place of divine love, and not like those who, downward, into a troubled ocean. Anchor yourselves to the eternal throne, and never be divided even in thought from the love of God, which is in Christ our Lord. May it be my privilege and yours, brothers and sisters, to lean these heads of ours on the bosom of him that day break and the shadows flee away. Amen and Amen.

Communications.

SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF WALTON'S CREEK CHURCH.

BY N. L. ROBERTS, D. D.

When it became necessary to call a new pastor, at Walton's Creek, all felt that it was a very important matter, that great results were bound up in it, and that it was not to be hastened. Moreover, upon canvassing the matter among the brethren, it was found that there was a strong sentiment. They wanted a minister of a very different character. They regarded as an essential qualification for the pastorate, other qualifications, given by the Spirit, they regarded as less necessary. They chose a man who was considered a revivalist by many. Wherever he went, he gained the church every one whom he persuaded, by any kind of argument, to join him. His pastorate was always short. When he resigned the churches were in confusion and trouble until the worldly material was got out of the churches died. He was a man of learning and talents, of a fine and noble character, and he had the one essential qualification, he had graduated at College. He did all he could secretly and indirectly to secure the place. To accomplish this purpose, he did all he could to persuade, even to the point of making a false statement, that no man was capable of filling the position unless he had a collegiate education. That the church and community had outgrown the ability of any but a college graduate. He was eloquent in setting forth the advantages of education to a minister of the gospel. Thus taking advantage of an unquestionable fact, he led the church to the point of making a false statement, that no man was capable of filling the position unless he had a collegiate education. That the church and community had outgrown the ability of any but a college graduate. He was eloquent in setting forth the advantages of education to a minister of the gospel. 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